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ELECTION DAY--THE U.S. MOOD

ANNCR:

MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ARE GOING TO THE POLLS TODAY TO CHOOSE THEIR NEXT PRESIDENT. WHAT IS THEIR MOOD AS THEY DO SO? SEVERAL LEADING POLITICAL ANALYSTS HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT THAT QUESTION IN THE PAST FEW DAYS. HERE IS ---------- WITH A SUMMARY OF THEIR VIEWS ON THE NATIONAL MOOD.

VOICE:

REPORTER HAYNES JOHNSON OF THE WASHINGTON POST, HAS TRAVELED THE COUNTRY IN RECENT WEEKS, NOT FOLLOWING CANDIDATES, BUT TALKING TO PEOPLE. HE SEES THE NATION'S MOOD AS ONE OF CONCERN -- A CONCERN SELDOM SEEN IN PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTIONS. AS HE PUTS IT: "AMERICANS OF VOTING AGE HAVE BEEN CALLED MANY UNFLATTERING THINGS THIS ELECTION YEAR: APATHETIC, CYNICAL, NEGATIVE, TURNED-OFF." BUT THESE TERMS, MISTER JOHNSON SAYS, MISS THE MARK. THE POST ANALYST FEELS THAT THIS YEAR'S ELECTORATE, IN HIS WORDS, "IS THE MOST REALISTIC, BEST INFORMED, LEAST IDEOLOGICAL" IN THE NATION'S HISTORY. HE POINTS OUT THAT SINCE THE LAST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, THE AMERICAN VOTER HAS BEEN BESET BY A SERIES OF EVENTS WITHOUT PARALLEL IN AMERICAN HISTORY. HE CITES THE VIETNAM WAR, THE WATERGATE SCANDALS, THE DETERIORATED ECONOMIC STATE OF THE NATION, AS SEARING EVENTS.

MISTER JOHNSON SEES THE MOOD OF THE AVERAGE AMERICAN AS "CRITICAL AND WATCHFUL." AFTER THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS, MISTER JOHNSON FINDS HIS COMPATRIOTS MORE

APPRECIATIVE FOR WHAT HE CALLS "THE COMPLEXITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF LIFE, BOTH THEIRS AND THEIR COUNTRY'S THEY ARE NO LONGER SO NAIVE AS TO LOOK AT POTENTIAL LEADERS--AND PRESIDENTS--AS SIMPLY HEROES OR VILLAINS."

IN ANY CASE, LIKE SO MANY OTHER POLITICAL REPORTERS, MISTER JOHNSON IS UNCERTAIN AS TO HOW HIS FELLOW-CITIZENS ARE VOTING. HE SEES THE NATIONAL MOOD AS ONE OF GENUINE SOUL-SEARCHING--A MOOD THAT CARRIES RIGHT INTO THE ELECTION BOOTH.

TO CORRESPONDENT DAVID BRODER, WRITING IN SUNDAY'S NEW YORK TIMES, THE ELECTION WAS PRECEDED BY A CAMPAIGN IN WHICH A HANDFUL OF CANDIDATES SOUGHT THE NOMINATIONS OF BOTH MAJOR PARTIES. IN THAT SEARCH THEY WERE HELPED BY MANY THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS. AND IT IS TO THEM THAT MISTER BRODER PAYS THIS TRIBUTE:

"THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE", HE SAYS , "WHO COULDN'T REACH THEIR GOALS THIS YEAR, BUT WHO CONTRIBUTED MIGHTILY TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. WHAT THOSE PEOPLE DID FREELY AND CHEERFULLY, SAYS MISTER BRODER, "WAS A REFUTATION OF THE NOTION THAT THIS TWO-HUNDRED-YEAR OLD EXPERIMENT IN SELF-GOVERNMENT HAS RUN ITS COURSE, LOST ITS ZEAL, OR ITS MEANING."

ERIC SEVAREID, THE COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM'S TOP RADIO AND TELEVISION COMMENTATOR, SEES THE NATION'S MOOD ON THE EVE OF ELECTION DAY AS ONE OF REACHING A DECISION IN THE MIDST OF AN AMBIGUOUS SITUATION. AS HE PUTS IT--"WE ARE AT PEACE, BUT THE WORLD IS UNSAFE. WE DON'T FEEL ISOLATIONIST, BUT WE DON'T FEEL INTERVENTIONIST. WE HAVE TOO MUCH UNEMPLOYMENT, BUT THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE ARE WORKING AND EARNING. PEOPLE," SAYS MISTER SEVAREID, "LIKE MISTER FORD, BUT ARE UNSURE OF HIS REAL CAPACITIES. THEY ARE IMPRESSED

BY CARTER'S DRIVE AND GRASP, BUT ARE UNSURE THAT THEY UNDERSTAND HIM AS A PERSON. THEY SEE POLICY AND PROGRAM FAILURES, BUT ARE UNSURE WHETHER TO BLAME WHITE HOUSE OR CONGRESS. IN OTHER WORDS," SAYS MISTER SEVARED," THE WHOLE PICTURE IS BLURRED THIS TIME, AND NATURALLY SO. IT IS SIMPLY THAT KIND OF A PERIOD." NEVERTHELESS, HE IS CONVINCED, "WHOEVEP WINS, THE GLOBE WILL STILL TURN ON ITS AXIS, AND MEN WILL STILL PUT ON THEIR PANTS ONE LEG AT A TIME." IF, HE CONCLUDES, THERE IS NO CLEAR MANDATE FOR THE WINNER, "HE'LL HAVE TO ASSERT HIS OWN MANDATE...AND MAKE IT REAL BY HIS OWN ACTIONS."

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